

1 Trimeric Photosystem I facilitates energy transfer from 2 phycobilisomes in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803

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8 **Short Title**

9 Trimeric Photosystem I facilitates energy transfer

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15 **Author Contributions**

16 P.A. and P.H.L. conceived the project and designed the experiments. P.A., A.B., and F.B.-V. prepared
17 the biological samples and conducted most of the spectroscopic measurements. L.K. and P.A.
18 performed P₇₀₀ oxidation measurements; I.D. and F.B.-V. performed protein gel electrophoresis. P.A.,
19 A.B. and P.H.L. performed data analysis. P.A., A.B., and P.H.L. wrote the paper with contributions
20 from all authors. P.H.L. is responsible for communication.

21 **One-sentence summary**

22 Cyanobacterial mutants with monomeric photosystem I show changes in the composition and
23 abundance of phycobilisomes and in the excitation energy transfer to photosystems II and I.

24 **ABSTRACT**

25 In cyanobacteria, phycobilisomes serve as peripheral light-harvesting complexes of the two
26 photosystems, extending their antenna size and the wavelength range of photons available for
27 photosynthesis. The abundance of phycobilisomes, the number of phycobiliproteins they contain, and
28 their light-harvesting function are dynamically adjusted in response to the physiological conditions.
29 Phycobilisomes are also thought to be involved in state transitions that maintain the excitation balance
30 between the two photosystems. Unlike its eukaryotic counterpart, PSI is trimeric in many
31 cyanobacterial species, and the physiological significance of this is not well understood. Here, we

32 compared the composition and light-harvesting function of phycobilisomes in cells of *Synechocystis*
33 sp. PCC 6803, which has primarily trimeric PSI, and the *ApsaL* mutant, which lacks the PsaL subunit
34 of PSI and is unable to form trimers. We also investigated a mutant additionally lacking the PsaJ and
35 PsaF subunits of PSI. Both strains with monomeric PSI accumulated significantly more
36 allophycocyanin per chlorophyll, indicating higher abundance of phycobilisomes. On the other hand, a
37 higher phycocyanin:allophycocyanin ratio in the wild type suggests larger phycobilisomes or the
38 presence of APC-less phycobilisomes (CpcL-type) that are not assembled in cells with monomeric
39 PSI. Steady-state and time-resolved fluorescence spectroscopy at room temperature and 77K revealed
40 that PSII receives more energy from the phycobilisomes at the expense of PSI in cells with monomeric
41 PSI, regardless of the presence of PsaF. Taken together, these results show that the oligomeric state of
42 PSI impacts the excitation energy flow in *Synechocystis*.

43 INTRODUCTION

44 Although the photosynthetic apparatus of cyanobacteria is largely similar to that of eukaryotic algae
45 and plants, cyanobacteria are distinct in several key aspects. Cyanobacteria lack the membrane-
46 intrinsic antenna proteins of the LHC family but utilize membrane-peripheral phycobilisomes (PBSs)
47 to increase the absorption cross-section of the two photosystems, PSI and PSII. The organization and
48 function of the cyanobacterial thylakoid membranes is defined by the large PBSs attached to them and
49 the coexistence of the photosynthetic and respiratory electron-transport chains sharing electron
50 carriers. Apart from their peripheral antenna systems, cyanobacterial and plant PSI differ by their
51 quaternary structure and subunit composition. Four small hydrophobic protein subunits - PsaF, PsaJ,
52 PsaK and PsaX (only present in thermophilic species) cover the membrane-exposed surface of
53 cyanobacterial PSI (Fromme et al., 2003). The functional role of PsaF in cyanobacterial PSI, apart
54 from structural stabilization, is not established. It has been suggested that PsaF may be involved in the
55 docking of the PBSs (Hippler et al., 1999) and, under iron deficiency, to mediate the interaction of the
56 PSI core with the iron stress-induced chlorophyll-binding protein IsiA (Fromme et al., 2003; Akita et
57 al., 2020). Whereas eukaryotic PSI is monomeric, in cyanobacteria it is found in the form of trimers
58 and in some species tetramers. The PsaL subunit is crucial for trimer formation and mutants lacking
59 PsaL only accumulate PSI monomers (Chitnis and Chitnis, 1993). The physiological advantages of
60 PSI oligomerization in cyanobacteria are not clear. PSI trimers have higher far-red absorption thanks
61 to the presence of long-wavelength chlorophylls (Chls). and the trimeric state may facilitate quenching
62 of excess excitation energy by the oxidized reaction center (RC) and help protect against
63 photoinhibition and ROS generation (Karapetyan et al., 1999; Kłodawska et al., 2020). It has also been
64 proposed that the trimeric state could facilitate excitation energy transfer (EET) from the PBS to PSI
65 (Şener et al., 2004).

66 The PBS is composed of phycobiliproteins (PBPs) and linker proteins organized as rods radiating from
67 a membrane-attached core (MacColl, 1998; Arteni et al., 2009; Zheng et al., 2021). In the
68 cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 (hereafter called *Synechocystis*), six PBS rods connect
69 three hexameric phycocyanin (PC) discs each and the core consists of three cylinders, each with two
70 stacked allophycocyanin (APC) hexamers (Arteni et al., 2009). The ApcD and ApcE (L_{CM})
71 polypeptides of the core are crucial for the interaction with the photosystems and contain the longest-
72 wavelength (680 nm) ‘terminal emitter’ pigments of the PBS that transfer energy to Chls in both
73 photosystems (Ashby and Mullineaux, 1999; Rakhimberdieva et al., 2001; Liu and Blankenship,
74 2019). In situ cryoelectron tomography has revealed the ordered arrays of PBS-PSII supercomplexes,
75 where energy can presumably migrate also laterally between PBS making for a very efficient light-
76 harvesting system (Rast et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021). Plausible routes for energy migration from PBS
77 to PSI can be directly via interaction between them (Mullineaux, 1994; Liu et al., 2013) or indirectly
78 via “spillover” from PSII to PSI (McConnell et al., 2002; Ueno et al., 2017). ApcE is responsible for
79 EET to PSII, whereas ApcD is proposed to serve as an energy donor primarily for PSI (Ashby and
80 Mullineaux, 1999; Dong et al., 2009; Liu and Blankenship, 2019). In *Synechocystis* and other
81 cyanobacterial species, an alternative PBS can be found, containing a single PC rod connected to the
82 linker protein CpcL (CpcG2 in *Synechocystis*) but no APC core (Kondo et al., 2005; Mullineaux,
83 2008). The CpcL-type PBSs can interact with PSI transferring energy directly to it (Kondo et al.,
84 2007; Watanabe et al., 2014).

85 The relative excitation of PSI and PSII can be rapidly regulated by the mechanism of state transitions,
86 which is triggered by the redox state of the PQ pool (for reviews, see Mullineaux and Emlyn-Jones,
87 2005; Calzadilla and Kirilovsky, 2020). Several mutations in the PBS core are known to block or
88 reduced the ability to perform state transitions, at least in some species (Ashby and Mullineaux, 1999;
89 Dong et al., 2009; Calzadilla et al., 2019; Zlenko et al., 2019), highlighting the key role of the PBS in
90 the process. However, the exact mechanism of cyanobacterial state transitions is under debate and
91 alternative models are proposed, including a mobile PBS shuttling between PSI and PSII, regulated
92 spillover (PSII–PSI energy transfer), and PSII quenching.

93 Cyanobacterial cells can modify the characteristics and abundance of PBSs in response to changes in
94 the environmental conditions. Shortening of the PC rods under high growth light has been reported in
95 several species, whereas low-intensity light elevates the PC content (Raps et al., 1985; Samson et al.,
96 1994; Nomsawai et al., 1999). Macronutrient limitation results in extensive PBS breakdown (Salomon
97 et al., 2013) that could provide the cell with amino acids – thereby, PBPs have obtained a secondary
98 role as intracellular storage compounds.

99 Changes in the PBS can in turn affect the relative abundance of the membrane pigment-protein
100 complexes. Genetically manipulated strains with shorter PBS rods or devoid of PBS accumulate more
101 PSII relative to PSI (Nagarajan et al., 2014; Liberton et al., 2017). The PSI:PSII ratio in cyanobacteria

102 is typically 2–4 and varies depending on the light intensity and quality that the organism is cultured in
103 (Murakami and Fujita, 1991). Low growth irradiance increases the abundance of PSI and vice versa.
104 The sensing mechanisms controlling the PBPs and photosystem abundance are not well elucidated
105 (Stadnichuk et al., 2015). Different growth conditions, such as light, temperature and available
106 nutrients may change the PSI oligomeric state and the ratio of monomers to trimers (Ivanov et al.,
107 2006; Salomon and Keren, 2011; Kłodawska et al., 2015). Furthermore, mutants unable to form PSI
108 trimers have shown changes in the relative fluorescence emission of PBS components suggesting that
109 the oligomeric state influences the PBS composition (Kłodawska et al., 2020).

110 In this work, we take a look into the relationship between the oligomeric state of PSI, the PBS
111 composition and abundance, and the EET from PBS to the photosystems, by comparing *Synechocystis*
112 (which has predominantly trimeric PSI) and the $\Delta psal$ mutant (unable to form trimers). In addition,
113 we investigated a mutant lacking also the F and J subunits ($\Delta FIJL$) to test if the PsaF and PsaJ subunits
114 have specific role in EET from the PBS to PSI. We compare the PSI and PSII ratios as well as the PBP
115 (PC and APC) content of the mutant cells with WT and will show that mutants with monomeric PSI
116 have an altered composition and abundance of PBS. We also employed steady-state and time-resolved
117 fluorescence spectroscopy at ambient and cryogenic temperature to evaluate the EET from PBS to the
118 photosystems. By low-temperature time-resolved fluorescence spectroscopy we could separate PSII
119 and PSI emission components as well as populations of free, weakly, and strongly coupled PBPs. We
120 show that the changes in the PBS composition affect the dynamics of EET in the cells and the
121 excitation distribution between PSII and PSI, supporting the idea that PBS transfer energy more
122 efficiently to trimeric than to monomeric PSI.

123 **RESULTS**

124 **Changes in the pigment stoichiometry**

125 We cultured *Synechocystis* (WT), which contains PSI trimers and the two mutants with monomeric
126 PSI, $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$, under the exact same conditions, to examine the phenotype effects of the
127 mutations. Both mutants appeared more greenish in colour suggesting a change in the pigment
128 composition of the cells. Accordingly, absorption spectra of the supernatant obtained after sedimenting
129 the broken cell debris (Supplementary Fig. S1) show a distinct shoulder around 650 nm in both
130 mutants – $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$ – suggesting increased APC content. We estimated the PC and APC
131 composition of the cell cultures from absorption spectra of the supernatant (Table 1). The Chl content
132 was measured from methanol extracts of either the cell debris or whole cell sediment, yielding
133 approximately equal results. We found that the ratio of PC to Chl was unchanged between the WT and
134 mutant cultures. However, the amount of APC, relative to PC or Chl, was significantly higher in the
135 monomeric mutants, as shown by the lower PC:APC and Chl:APC ratios in the mutants compared to
136 the WT. If we assume that all, or almost all, PC in the WT is found in the PBS rods, the lower

137 PC:APC ratio in the mutants means that the PBSs have either fewer or shorter PC rods. On the other
138 hand, the more abundant APC indicates a higher number of PBS cores in the cells. From these data it
139 follows that both the composition and the number of the PBSs are altered in the mutants with
140 monomeric PSI – they contain more PBSs as a whole (on Chl basis) compared to WT, but the PBSs in
141 WT are larger, containing more PC, or WT cells contain additional PBSs without APC (see below).

142 It must be noted that the PC:APC ratios in the WT are higher than expected. PBSs are typically found
143 to contain six rods with three PC hexamers per tricylindrical core (Arteni et al., 2009; Rast et al.,
144 2019), which amounts to a PC:APC ratio of 3:1. Although one could merely attribute the discrepancy
145 to a systematic error in the PC:APC estimation, it should be pointed out that we obtained different
146 results from isolated PBSs using the same measurement methodology (Supplementary Table S1). The
147 PC:APC ratio of isolated PBSs was found to be around 4:1 – similar to previous reports. More
148 importantly, the ratios were the same in PBSs of the WT and mutants, as evident from their nearly
149 identical absorption spectra (Supplementary Fig. S1). It must be concluded that WT cells under our
150 growth conditions contain extra PC, which is either not connected to the PBS core in vivo or is weakly
151 connected such that it dissociates during isolation of PBSs.

152 The striking change in the PBS content and composition found in the monomeric PSI mutants
153 compared to WT *Synechocystis* prompted to test whether there was a corresponding change in the
154 photosystem stoichiometry. To this end, we estimated the number of PSI and PSII RCs in the cells by
155 the absorption difference of the oxidized and reduced forms of P₇₀₀ and Cyt *b*₅₅₉, respectively (Table 2
156 and Supplementary Fig. S2). We found P₇₀₀:Cyt *b*₅₅₉ ratios of 1.5–1.7 that were not significantly
157 different between mutants and WT. These values are similar to the ones reported by Murakami and
158 Fujita (1991). However, in this paper it was assumed that there are two Cyt *b*₅₅₉ per PSII RC, hence the
159 reported PSI:PSII ratios were twice as high. A RC ratio of 1.5 means that there are equimolar ratios of
160 PSI trimers (PSI₃) and PSII dimers (PSII₂) in WT or three monomeric PSI per PSII₂ in the mutants.
161 From these ratios and the number of Chls in PSI and PSII, we can estimate 3–4 PSI and the same
162 number of PSII complexes per PBS in the WT. In the monomeric mutants, although the number of
163 PBS is apparently increased, there are still more (monomeric) PSI complexes per PBS (6–7) but fewer
164 PSII (2–3). Thus, we could potentially interpret the increased number of PBS in the mutants as an
165 adaptive response that compensates for the number of PSI per PBS.

166 **Steady-state fluorescence emission spectra**

167 As a further confirmation of the pigment stoichiometry changes, we recorded fluorescence emission
168 spectra of intact WT, $\Delta psal$, and $\Delta FIJL$ cells at 77 K (Figure 1). The spectra recorded with 580 nm
169 excitation (primarily absorbed by PC) have peaks at 650, 660, 687/693, and 720 nm. The peaks at 650
170 and 660 nm correspond to PC and APC and the ones at 687/693 and 720 nm – primarily to PSII and
171 PSI, respectively. In accordance with the higher amount of PC determined in the WT, the spectra
172 showed significantly ($p < 0.05$, see Materials and Methods) more intense emission at 650 nm. The two

173 monomeric PSI types, $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$, had similar fluorescence spectra. The ratio of fluorescence
 174 emitted at 650 nm to 660 nm decreased in the monomeric PSI types in line with the decreased
 175 PC:APC ratio. Statistically significant changes in the PC:APC emission ratio were also found in the
 176 room-temperature fluorescence emission spectra (Supplementary Fig. S3).

177 The photon energy absorbed by the PBSs is ultimately distributed between both PSI and PSII as
 178 evident from their corresponding emission peaks. The relative amplitudes of the 687/693 and 720 nm
 179 peaks suggest that in $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$ cells more energy is transferred to PSII compared to WT. In
 180 contrast, the fluorescence spectra recorded with 440 nm excitation (almost exclusively absorbed by the
 181 photosystems) show no statistically significant difference in the ratio of the PSII and PSI peaks. This
 182 is expected because the PSI:PSII stoichiometric ratio (on monomer basis) is unchanged. Thus, the
 183 stronger PSII emission upon 580 nm indicates that the distribution of excitation energy from PBSs to
 184 PSII/PSI is altered in the monomeric PSI types.

185 **P₇₀₀ oxidation kinetics**

186 To compare the effective antenna size of PSI, we recorded the oxidation kinetics of P₇₀₀ (absorption
 187 transients at 830 nm) in intact cells and isolated PSI complexes upon illumination in the presence of
 188 DCMU and MV. DCMU prevents re-reduction of P₇₀₀⁺ by electrons from PSII and MV accepts
 189 electrons from PSI keeping the acceptor side of PSI in oxidized state and minimizing cyclic electron
 190 flow. The oxidation curves at different light intensities are shown in Supplementary Fig. S4 and the
 191 oxidation rates obtained by fitting logistic or exponential kinetics to the curves are in Figure 2. At all
 192 light intensities in the range 6–805 $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$, the oxidation rates in WT *Synechocystis* cells were
 193 higher than either of the monomeric PSI types – up to 60% at 140 $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$. These data indicate
 194 that the effective antenna size of monomeric PSI in vivo is smaller compared to trimeric PSI. The
 195 oxidation kinetics were measured with 635 nm light, predominantly absorbed by the PBS. Hence, a
 196 possible explanation for the different rates could be that PBS transfer energy more effectively to
 197 trimeric than to monomeric PSI. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the P₇₀₀ oxidation rates
 198 were similar in monomeric and trimeric isolated PSI (Figure 2B) as well as in thylakoid membranes,
 199 which lack PBSs (Supplementary Fig. S5).

200 Fluorescence kinetics of cells at room temperature

201 We employed picosecond time-resolve fluorescence spectroscopy to gain better understanding of the
 202 excitation energy partitioning in the intact cells of *Synechocystis* with trimeric (WT), monomeric
 203 ($\Delta psal$) and subunit-depleted ($\Delta FIJL$) PSI. Time-resolved fluorescence enables better separation of
 204 emission components, for example emission of PBSs that are energetically coupled to the
 205 photosystems from free PBPs and can detect changes in the architecture and supramolecular
 206 organisation of the photosynthetic complexes that affect the EET. We applied global five-exponential
 207 analysis of the fluorescence decays recorded in the wavelength range 600–720 nm after excitation at

208 580 nm. Figure 3 compares the lifetimes and decay-associated emission spectra (DAES) of WT,
 209 $\Delta psal$, and $\Delta FIJL$ cells. The lifetimes and spectra are very similar between genotypes and are
 210 comparable to previously published results on cyanobacterial cells (Mullineaux and Holzwarth, 1991;
 211 Tian et al., 2011; Akhtar et al., 2020). The first two components (Figure 3A,B), with respective
 212 lifetimes around 30 ps and 90–100 ps, represent EET within the PBS (Akhtar et al., 2020). The DAES
 213 have characteristic positive and negative peaks around 650, 660, and 680 nm, signifying decay and
 214 rise of the emission from PC, APC and red-shifted APC (APC₆₈₀), respectively. The third component
 215 with a lifetime about 170 ps represents mainly decay of APC excitations in PBS coupled to
 216 photosystems and the fourth, around 500–600 is associated with trapping in PSII. A longer-lived
 217 component (1.4–1.6 ns, Supplemental Fig. S6) indicated the presence of a negligible amount (2–3%)
 218 of uncoupled PBPs.

219 As seen in Figure 3, there is little difference between the genotypes as concerning the shape of the
 220 DAES. On close inspection, the DAES of WT cells display relatively larger amplitudes at 640–650 nm
 221 (Figure 3B,C), consistent with their higher PC:APC ratio. There was also a small increase in the PBS-
 222 associated decay lifetimes in WT compared to the other two types.

223 The most notable kinetic difference between WT cells and those with monomeric PSI is in the PSII
 224 decay component (Figure 3D). In monomeric PSI types, the amplitude of this component was 50±5%
 225 larger than in WT (the difference is statistically significant, $p < 0.01$). This result confirms the finding
 226 that a larger proportion of excitation energy is transferred to PSII in cells with monomeric PSI,
 227 compared to cells with trimeric PSI. Moreover, as we observe only negligible amount of uncoupled
 228 PBPs in the *Synechocystis* cells, we can make the reverse conclusion – namely, that PBPs transfer
 229 more energy to PSI when it is trimeric rather than monomeric.

230 **Fluorescence kinetics of cells at 77K**

231 We further examined the fluorescence decay kinetics of intact cells at 77K for better resolution of the
 232 different pigment groups. Most importantly, the emission from the long-wavelength “red” Chls in PSI
 233 is well pronounced allowing us direct comparison of the energy flow to the two photosystems. Global
 234 analysis of the fluorescence decays resulted in six decay lifetimes and DAES. Individual DAES for the
 235 three *Synechocystis* genotypes are compared in Figure 4. We will first briefly describe the kinetic
 236 components in WT cells. The fastest component (13 ps, Figure 4A) shows decay of PC emission at
 237 640 nm and concomitant rise of APC emission at 660 nm. In addition, EET from bulk to red Chls in
 238 PSI occurs on this timescale (690 to 720 nm). The second component (56 ps, Figure 4B) shows decay
 239 of both PC and APC and rise of the red-shifted APC₆₈₀. The 145-ps component (Figure 4C) has
 240 positive peaks corresponding to all three PBP groups (PC, APC and APC₆₈₀) that evidently decay as
 241 energy is transferred to Chls. Also notable are the negative peaks at 690 nm (PSII) and 720 nm (PSI).
 242 The PSII and PSI emission components decay mainly with lifetimes of 373 ps and 982 ps (Figure
 243 4D,E) while the final component (3.8 ns, Figure 4) is of negligible amplitude. Remarkably, PC

244 fluorescence detected at 640–650 nm spans the entire range of decay timescales (in WT). A sizeable
245 fraction of long-lived PC is less efficient in transferring excitation energy downstream (note the 650
246 nm peaks in Figure 4C–E). It is also of note that a considerable proportion of photon energy absorbed
247 by the PBS is delivered to PSI, judging by the height of the DAES peaks around 720 nm.

248 Compared to WT, the DAES of both monomeric PSI types showed notable differences. Remarkable
249 are the kinetic differences in the 640–680 nm wavelength range reflecting PBPs emission. In $\Delta psal$
250 and $\Delta FIJL$ cells, PC emission decays faster than in WT – the peaks at 650 nm in the long-lived DAES
251 all but vanish. Conversely, the amplitudes of the APC peaks at 660 and 680 nm are larger than in WT.
252 Especially obvious is the larger negative peak at 680 nm in the 58-ps DAES (Figure 4B) and
253 corresponding positive peak in the 136-ps DAES (Figure 4C). These results show unequivocally that
254 the altered PBP stoichiometry results in changes in the excitation dynamics of the intact and
255 energetically coupled PBSs.

256 The fluorescence emission components decaying with lifetimes around 140 ps and 360 ps (Figure 4C-
257 D) have higher amplitudes at 685 nm in the monomeric PSI types. Although the emission at 685 nm
258 can originate from the terminal emitters in APC (APC₆₈₀), the decay is nevertheless due to energy
259 being transferred to PSII. These components are absent in PSII-deficient *Synechocystis* (P. Akhtar, F.
260 Balog-Vig, P.H. Lambrev, unpublished data). Therefore, the fluorescence kinetics at 77 K further
261 supports the finding that a larger proportion of PBS excitations are transferred to PSII when PSI is
262 monomeric.

263

264 As a control, we analysed the fluorescence kinetics at 77 K upon 440 nm excitation, which excludes
265 the PBS contribution to the dynamics. In this case, the lifetimes and DAES of intact cells were
266 virtually identical to the ones reported earlier for isolated thylakoid membranes (Supplementary Fig.
267 S7). The fluorescence decays reflect mainly the dynamics in PSI, as it has 4–5 times larger absorption
268 cross section than PSII. The most apparent difference in the fluorescence kinetics is the reduced
269 amplitude of the DAES emitting at 710–715 nm, attributed to the loss of red Chls at the trimerization
270 region (Akhtar et al., 2021).

271 Additionally, we compared the fluorescence kinetics of isolated PBSs of WT, $\Delta psal$, and $\Delta FIJL$ at
272 room temperature and 77 K (Supplementary Figs. S8, S9). Interestingly, the clear differences in the
273 PC dynamics, that were observed in whole cells, could not be detected in the isolated PBS. This result
274 is in line with the fact that changes in the PC:APC ratio were detected in whole cells but not in isolated
275 PBSs.

276 **DISCUSSION**

277 A key finding of this study is that the oligomeric state of PSI exerts control over the abundance of
 278 PBPs in *Synechocystis* and, by extension, the PBS composition. The $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$ genotypes with
 279 monomeric PSI contained more PBS cores on Chl basis compared to the WT genotype with trimeric
 280 PSI but, at the same time, fewer PCs per APC core (Tables 1 and 2). In agreement with the
 281 spectroscopic quantification, semiquantitative SDS-PAGE analysis showed lower PC:APC ratios in
 282 cells of the monomeric PSI mutants (Supplementary Fig. S10). The results are in line with the reported
 283 fluorescence spectral changes in the $\Delta psal$ mutant of *Synechocystis* (Kłodawska et al., 2020).

284 By comparing the data from cells and isolated PBSs we can conclude that WT cells contain extra PC
 285 rods that are not found in the isolated PBS. There are two possibilities to consider. The first is that the
 286 additional PC are weakly bound to the PBS making up for longer rods radiating from the PBS core or
 287 additional laterally bound rods that are dissociated during the PBS isolation. In support of the longer-
 288 rod hypothesis, we found a change in content of the two rod linkers, L_R^{33} (CpcC1) and L_R^{30} (CpcC2),
 289 in the SDS-PAGE of cell soluble material (Supplementary Fig. S10). In both monomeric PSI types the
 290 abundance of L_R^{30} relative to L_R^{33} was significantly ($p < 0.05$) lower than in WT. Assuming a model,
 291 where L_R^{30} connects hexamers distal to the APC core, whereas L_R^{33} is bound to the proximal hexamers
 292 (Ughy and Ajlani, 2004), the results can be interpreted to show that some PBS in the monomeric PSI
 293 types have rods composed of only two hexamers.

294 Larger PBS should result in increased rod-core energy equilibration times (Sandström et al., 1988;
 295 Zhang et al., 1997). Although the energy equilibration was indeed longer in WT compared to the other
 296 two types, the differences are too small to account for an almost double PC content per core. On the
 297 other hand, a very long-lived PC fluorescence component in WT can be assigned to a fraction of
 298 weakly connected PC rods that suggest unconventional attachment to the membrane. These “semi-
 299 free” rods may be easily lost during PBS isolation.

300 The second possibility is that the “extra” PC in WT cells is assembled in distinct PBSs that do not
 301 contain APC. It is tempting to assign this to the PBS type containing the linker protein CpcG2 or
 302 CpcL. CpcL-containing PBS (CpcL-PBS) consist only of PC rods attached directly to the membrane
 303 without an APC core and are known to transfer energy preferentially to PSI (Kondo et al., 2007;
 304 Kondo et al., 2009). CpcL-PBS are readily isolated from APC-deficient cyanobacterial mutants, where
 305 they become the predominant PBS type but their abundance in WT *Synechocystis* cells is not well
 306 documented and appears to vary with experimental conditions and especially light quality, as the
 307 expression of CpcG2/CpcL is regulated by the phytochrome-like protein CcaS (Hirose et al., 2008).
 308 SDS-PAGE showed no major differences in the PBPs or linker protein content of the isolated APC-
 309 containing PBSs (Supplementary Fig. S10), nor were there notable functional differences among them.
 310 It is possible that the reduced PC:APC ratio in both mutants with monomeric PSI is because these

311 mutants, in contrast to WT, do not assemble CpcL-PBSs. In this case it would follow that almost half
 312 of the PC in WT is assembled in CpcL-PBSs (comparing the PC:APC ratios of cells and isolated
 313 PBSs). It is worth pointing out that the observed reduction in the ratio of L_R^{30}/L_R^{33} linkers in the
 314 monomeric PSI types is also compatible with a lower amount of CpcL-PBSs since these PBSs contain
 315 less CpcC2 (L_R^{30}) compared to the CpcG-type PBSs (Liu et al., 2019).

316 The modulation of the PBS composition (or architecture) can be understood as an adaptive response.
 317 Cyanobacteria regulate their PBS content in response to the physiological conditions. Growth under
 318 high irradiance changes the abundance of PBS, reducing the cell PC content (Raps et al., 1985) and
 319 shortening of the PC rods has been reported in *Synechococcus* (Samson et al., 1994), *S. maxima*
 320 (Garnier et al., 1994), and *S. platensis* (Nomsawai et al., 1999). The growth conditions regulate the
 321 expression of specific linker proteins controlling the PBS architecture (Nomsawai et al., 1999; Hihara
 322 et al., 2001), such as the CpcG2/CpcL linker (Hirose et al., 2008). PBPs are also reservoirs for
 323 nutrients, degraded when nutrients, e.g. nitrogen, are scarce (Salomon et al., 2013), so it is plausible
 324 that downstream metabolism changes will also alter the PBP content.

325 We reason that the absence of trimeric PSI in *Synechocystis* results in suboptimal or imbalanced EET,
 326 consequently electron transfer, which causes a change in the PBS content and composition. The
 327 steady-state and time-resolved fluorescence data show that more energy is transferred to PSII in WT
 328 and that the effective PSI antenna size is diminished in $\Delta psal$ and $\Delta FIJL$ cells (but not thylakoid
 329 membranes or isolated PSI). The results strongly suggest that the PBSs transfer excitation energy more
 330 efficiently to trimeric than to monomeric PSI. There could be several reasons for this difference:

331 1) Supercomplexes of PBSs with trimeric PSI can be more efficient by sharing the PBS among all
 332 three PSI RCs – increasing the effective antenna size. Then the increased number of APC-PBSs in the
 333 monomeric PSI strains can be seen as compensatory response for the loss of effective absorption
 334 cross-section. However, as PBSs transfer energy to both photosystems (Ashby and Mullineaux, 1999),
 335 merely increasing the number of PBSs will exacerbate the energy imbalance rather than alleviate it.
 336 On the other hand, strains devoid of PBSs or with truncated PBSs rods compensate for the reduced
 337 PSII antenna size by increasing the abundance of PSII (Ajilani et al., 1995; Nagarajan et al., 2014;
 338 Liberton et al., 2017) or the number of PBSs per photosystem (Leganes et al., 2014).

339 2) PSI trimers might have higher affinity to the PBSs forming a more stable PBS-PSI supercomplex.
 340 This may be in contrast to structural modelling that suggests the existence of a PBS fraction directly
 341 attached to PSI monomers (Zlenko et al., 2016).

342 3) CpcL-PBS may be an efficient antenna of trimeric PSI (in WT) but not of monomeric PSI. At
 343 present, this is only a conjecture based on the hypothetical assignment of the additional PC rods found
 344 only in WT cells to CpcL-PBS. It can be postulated that CpcL-PBS are only stably assembled in the
 345 presence of trimeric PSI. In *Anabaena sp.* PCC 7120, CpcL-PBS has been shown to attach to the

346 tetrameric PSI complex at the interface between two protomers (Watanabe et al., 2014), effectively
347 transferring energy to the PSI core within ~ 90 ps (Noji et al., 2021). It could be hypothesized that in
348 *Synechocystis* CpcL-PBS is only stably attached to two protomers of the PSI trimer. This hypothesis
349 would need further verification, firstly to confirm that the CpcL-PBS content differs in cells with
350 monomeric and trimeric PSI, and then, to explore the affinity and coupling of CpcL-PBS to PSI.

351 4) We must also consider the role of state transitions (Mullineaux and Emlyn-Jones, 2005; Calzadilla
352 and Kirilovsky, 2020). The $\Delta psal$ mutant of *Synechococcus* PCC 7002 was found to be capable of
353 performing a state II–state I transition faster than the wild type (Schluchter et al., 1996; Aspinwall et
354 al., 2004). However, there is no indication that the mutant is locked or preferentially found in state I.
355 On the contrary, as state transitions are regulated by the redox state of the PQ pool (Mullineaux and
356 Emlyn-Jones, 2005), it should be expected that any relative loss of PSI excitation will shift the balance
357 toward state II (which would cause an opposite change in the fluorescence spectra than observed).

358 It is also possible that a combination of the above factors contributes to the changes in the excitation
359 energy distribution. Regardless of the mechanism, however, the results show that the oligomerization
360 state of PSI has a substantial impact on the excitation energy flow from PBSs to the photosystems in
361 *Synechocystis*. Mutants with monomeric PSI compensate for the imbalanced excitation by adjusting
362 the PBS composition. In contrast, we could not discern a particular role of PsaF in the EET from PBS
363 to PSI as previously suggested (Fromme et al., 2003). These results add to the existing body of
364 evidence that the PBSs are a remarkably responsive and tuneable light-harvesting antenna system but
365 also provide a hint of the evolutionary advantage of oligomeric PSI in conjunction with PBSs.

366 MATERIALS AND METHODS

367 Cyanobacterial cultures and preparations

368 A glucose-tolerant *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 strain, culturable under light-activated heterotrophic
369 growth and maintained in our lab for decades, was used as WT. Cultures of WT, the $\Delta psal$ mutant
370 obtained on the same WT background (Kłodawska et al., 2015) and the subunit-depleted $\Delta FIJL$
371 mutant (Malavath et al., 2018) were grown photoautotrophically under continuous white fluorescent
372 light ($\sim 35 \mu\text{mol photons m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$) at 30°C . Thylakoid membranes and isolated PSI complexes were
373 prepared as described in Akhtar et al. (2021).

374 PBSs were prepared according to the protocol described in Garnier et al. (1994) with some
375 adjustments. Briefly, photoautotrophically grown cells were centrifuged to pellet at 6000 g at 25°C .
376 The pellet was washed twice with phosphate buffer (0.75 M phosphate buffer, 1 mM benzamidine
377 hydrochloride hydrate, 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.0 and 1 mM of phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride). The pellet
378 was collected and treated with 0.2 % (w/v) of lysozyme and incubated for 1 hour in dark at 37°C with
379 continuous shaking at 200 rpm. After incubation cells were pelleted down by centrifugation at 6000 g

380 for 7 minutes, 14 °C and washed twice in phosphate buffer to remove the remaining lysozyme. The
381 cells were then broken with glass beads ($\leq 106 \mu\text{m}$ diameter) using a homogenizer (Precellys
382 Evolution) equipped with dry ice cooling compartment. The remaining glass beads were removed by
383 centrifugation at 3000 g for 5 min at 14 °C. The supernatant was then treated with 3 % (v/v) Triton-
384 X100 with continuous stirring for 30 min at room temperature in dark and centrifuged at 21,000 g for
385 30 min to remove the unsolubilized material. The appropriate sample fraction was collected and
386 loaded onto a sucrose density step gradient (0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1 M) and centrifuged for 16 h at 104,000 g
387 14 °C for further purification. The gradient fraction containing PBSs was collected.

388 **Pigment analysis**

389 Chls were extracted from the cell suspensions in 90 % (v/v) methanol and the Chl contents were
390 determined spectrophotometrically using molar absorption coefficients described in Lichtenthaler
391 (1987).

392 The phycobiliprotein content was determined as described in Zavřel et al. (2018). For PBPs isolation,
393 100 ml of the cells from each type were pelleted by centrifugation at 6000 g for 5 min and resuspend
394 in phosphate buffer (50 mM, pH 6.5) to total vol of 5 ml. The cells were broken using a Precellys
395 Evolution homogenizer with dry-ice-cooled chamber (10 cycles of braking, 30 s vortex, 5500 rpm and
396 two min cooling). The homogenate was then sonicated intermittently (five sec sonication with interval
397 of 10 sec rest, four times) by ultrasonicator at ice water temperature. Unbroken cells and cell debris
398 were removed by low-speed centrifugation. Cell homogenates were then ultracentrifuged at 104 000g
399 for 60 min. Absorption spectra of the transparent supernatant in the range of 220–750 nm were
400 recorded to determine the soluble PBP content of the cells.

401 **Quantification of PSI and PSII**

402 The PSI and PSII concentrations were determined spectrophotometrically using the protocol described
403 by Fujita and Murakami (1987). For P_{700} measurements the samples were suspended to 20 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ (or
404 optical density of 2 at 680 nm) and for cytochrome (Cyt) to 60 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ (or optical density of 6 at 680
405 nm) in a buffer containing 20 mM MES/NaOH, pH 6.4, 10 mM MgCl_2 , 10 mM CaCl_2 . The control
406 absorption spectra in the range of 350–750 nm were recorded from each sample. To estimate the
407 concentration of P_{700} and Cyts, absorption spectra were recorded in the range 650–750 and 500–600
408 nm, respectively, with bandwidth of 1 nm. The P_{700} was first oxidized with 1 mM potassium
409 ferricyanide and then reduced with sodium ascorbate. The difference spectra (690–720 nm) between
410 oxidized and reduced P_{700} were identical to P_{700} and the difference at 700 nm was taken as the signal of
411 P_{700} . P_{700} abundance was estimated from the absorption difference with a molar extinct coefficient
412 $\Delta\epsilon_{\text{ox-red}} = 64 \text{ mM}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$ at 700 nm. For PSII determination, first all Cyts were oxidized with 1 mM of
413 potassium ferricyanide. Then few grains of hydroquinone were added, followed by addition of sodium

414 ascorbate and sodium dithionite. The difference spectra (520–580 nm) between hydroquinone-reduced
415 and ascorbate-reduced had peak at 559 nm – Cyt b_{559} .

416 **Redox kinetics of P700**

417 The functional antenna size of PSI was estimated by the rate of light induced oxidation of P₇₀₀ RC
418 under light limiting conditions. The oxidation kinetics of P₇₀₀ upon illumination was followed by the
419 measurement of absorbance change at 830 nm using Dual-PAM 100 Chl a fluorometer (Walz,
420 Germany). Prior to measurement samples were dark-adapted for 3 minutes in the presence of 100 μ M
421 methylviologen (MV) and 20 μ M DCMU (3-(3,4-dichlorophenyl)-1,1-dimethylurea) then cell
422 suspension equivalent to 20 μ g Chl was filtered onto a 25 mm diameter glass fibre syringe filter disc
423 (Whatman GF/C). The filter discs, placed between two microscopy slides with a spacer, were inserted
424 between the fibre optics of the emitter-detector unit. Samples were illuminated with 5-s long 635-nm
425 pulses at various intensities (6, 31, 140, 251, and 805 μ mol photon $m^{-2} s^{-1}$) consecutively and the
426 oxidation kinetics were recorded at a millisecond sampling rate.

427 **Steady-state absorption and fluorescence spectroscopy**

428 Absorption spectra in the range of 350–750 nm were recorded at room temperature with a Thermo
429 Evolution 500 dual-beam spectrophotometer. The measurements were performed in a standard glass
430 cell of 1-cm optical path length with 1 nm spectral bandwidth.

431 Fluorescence emission spectra in the visible range were measured from the same samples at room
432 temperature and 77K on a FP-8500 (Jasco, Japan) spectrofluorometer. The sample were diluted to
433 absorbance of 0.1 per cm at the red maximum. Emission spectra in the range of 620–780 nm were
434 recorded with excitation wavelength of 440 nm and 580 nm and excitation/emission bandwidth of
435 3 nm. The measurements were performed with 1 nm increment and 1 s integration time. For
436 measurements at 77 K, samples were cooled in an optical cryostat (Optistat DN, Oxford Instruments,
437 UK). The spectra are corrected for the spectral response of the detector.

438 **Time-resolved fluorescence spectroscopy**

439 Picosecond time-resolved fluorescence measurements were performed with a time-correlated single-
440 photon counting instrument (FluoTime 200/PicoHarp 300 spectrometer, PicoQuant). Excitation was
441 provided by Fianium WhiteLase Micro (NKT Photonics, UK) supercontinuum laser, generating white-
442 light pulses with a repetition rate of 20 MHz. Excitation wavelengths of 440 and 580 nm were used to
443 excite selectively Chls and PBSs. The fluorescence decays were recorded at wavelengths of 600–744
444 nm with 8 nm steps, at room temperature, and 605–760 nm with 5 nm steps at 77 K. All the samples
445 were diluted to an absorbance of 0.03 at excitation wavelength. For the room temperature
446 measurements, the suspension (whole cells or isolated complexes) was placed in 1 mm flow cell and
447 circulated at a flow rate of 4 ml/min. For 77 K measurements, the suspension was placed in a 1 mm
448 demountable cryogenic quartz cell and cooled in an optical cryostat (Optistat DN, Oxford Instruments,

449 UK). The total instrument response (IRF) measured using 1 % (v/v) Ludox as scattering solution has
450 width of 40 ps. The data are corrected for the spectral response of the detector. Global
451 multiexponential lifetime analysis with IRF reconvolution was performed using MATLAB.

452 **Statistical analysis**

453 Whenever appropriate, data are presented as mean \pm standard error, obtained from independent
454 measurements on different cell batches. The statistical significance, or lack thereof, of differences
455 between the two mutant strains and the WT is reported based on Student's *t*-test ($p < 0.05$).

456

457 **Accession Numbers**

458 Sequence data from this article can be found in the GenBank/EMBL data libraries under accession
459 numbers listed in Supplemental Table S2.

460

461 **Supplemental Data**

462 **Supplemental Figure S1.** Absorption spectra of extracts and phycobilisomes.

463 **Supplemental Figure S2.** Spectrophotometric determination of P₇₀₀ and Cyt b₅₅₉.

464 **Supplemental Figure S3.** Room-temperature emission spectra of cells.

465 **Supplemental Figure S4.** P₇₀₀⁺ signal traces.

466 **Supplemental Figure S5.** P₇₀₀ oxidation rates in thylakoid membranes.

467 **Supplemental Figure S6.** Decay-associated emission spectra of the longest, nanosecond components.

468 **Supplemental Figure S7.** Decay-associated emission spectra of cells at 77 K upon 440 nm excitation.

469 **Supplemental Figure S8.** Decay-associated emission spectra of phycobilisomes at room temperature.

470 **Supplemental Figure S9.** Decay-associated emission spectra of phycobilisomes at 77 K.

471 **Supplemental Figure S10.** SDS-PAGE of phycobilisomes and cell extracts.

472 **Supplemental Table S1.** Phycocyanin:allophycocyanin ratios in isolated phycobilisomes.

473 **Supplemental Table S2.** Gene/protein accession numbers.

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481 interpretation of the results.

482 Tables

483 Table 1. Phycocyanin (PC), allophycocyanin (APC) and chlorophyll (Chl) content of cell cultures

Type	PC ($\mu\text{mol/L}$)	APC ($\mu\text{mol/L}$)	Chl ($\mu\text{mol/L}$)	PC:APC	Chl:PC	Chl:APC
WT	2.2 \pm 0.1	0.30 \pm 0.01	10.5 \pm 0.4	7.3 \pm 0.2	4.79 \pm 0.07	34.6 \pm 0.3
Δ <i>psaL</i>	2.3 \pm 0.2	0.56* \pm 0.04	11.0 \pm 0.8	4.2** \pm 0.1	4.71 \pm 0.04	19.8** \pm 0.4
Δ FIJL	1.6 \pm 0.2	0.33 \pm 0.04	7.5 \pm 0.6	5.1** \pm 0.1	4.78 \pm 0.12	24.3** \pm 0.8

484 * Values are represented as the mean \pm standard error ($n = 5$). Statistically significant differences with WT are
485 marked with * (Student's test at $\alpha = 0.05$) and ** ($\alpha = 0.01$).

486

487 Table 2. Stoichiometric ratios of photosystem I (PSI), photosystem II (PSII) and phycobilisomes (PBS)

Type	P ₇₀₀ :Cyt <i>b</i> ₅₅₉	PSI:PSII	PSI:PBS	PSII:PBS
WT	1.6 \pm 0.2*	1.0 [†]	3.8 [‡]	3.6 [§]
Δ <i>psaL</i>	1.5 \pm 0.2	3.0	6.3	2.0
Δ FIJL	1.7 \pm 0.1	3.1	7.8	2.5

488 * Mean \pm standard error ($n = 4$).

489 [†] Estimated assuming trimeric PSI in WT, monomeric PSI in Δ *psaL* and Δ FIJL, and dimeric PSII in all types.

490 [‡] Assuming 285, 92 and 88 Chls per PSI from WT, Δ *psaL* and Δ FIJL, respectively, and 36 APC per PBS.

491 [§] Assuming 72 Chls per PSII and 36 APC per PBS.

492

493 Figure Legends

494 Figure 1. Fluorescence emission spectra of intact cells of *Synechocystis* WT, Δ *psaL* and Δ FIJL recorded at 77 K,
495 normalized to the maximum at 720 nm. (A) Excitation wavelength 580 nm; (B) Excitation wavelength 440 nm.
496 The spectra are average from 5–7 independent experiments; the shaded area represents the standard error.

497 Figure 2. P₇₀₀ oxidation rates. (A) intact cells of *Synechocystis* WT, Δ *psaL* and Δ FIJL; (B) isolated PSI. The
498 rates are calculated from the differential absorption at 830 nm induced by pulses of different light intensity,
499 applying logistic or exponential fit (for intensities under and above 100 $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$, respectively). Error bars
500 indicate standard errors from four independent experiments. Note the logarithmic vertical scale.

501 Figure 3. Decay-associated emission spectra (DAES) of *Synechocystis* cells obtained by global lifetime analysis
502 of the fluorescence decays recorded at room temperature with 580 nm excitation. Panels A-D compare individual

503 DAES for WT (black circles), $\Delta psal$ (red squares), and $\Delta FIJL$ (gold triangles) cells. The longest-lived (1.3-1.6
504 ns) component is plotted in Supplemental Fig. S6. The spectra are average from six independent experiments,
505 normalized to the same integrated fluorescence intensity (area of the steady-state fluorescence spectrum). The
506 standard error of the mean is shown by the shaded areas.

507 Figure 4. Decay-associated emission spectra (DAES) of *Synechocystis* cells obtained by global lifetime analysis
508 of the fluorescence decays recorded at 77 K with 580 nm excitation. The data are normalized to the same
509 integrated fluorescence intensity. Panels A-E compare individual DAES for WT (black circles), $\Delta psal$ (red
510 squares), and $\Delta FIJL$ (gold triangles) cells. The spectra are averages of three independent replicates and one
511 technical replicate. The shaded areas represent standard error. The longest, nanosecond component is plotted in
512 Supplemental Fig. S6.

513

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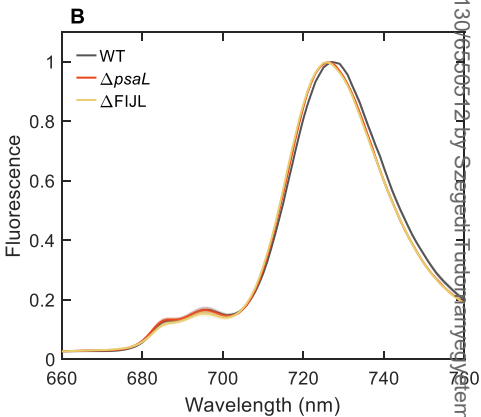
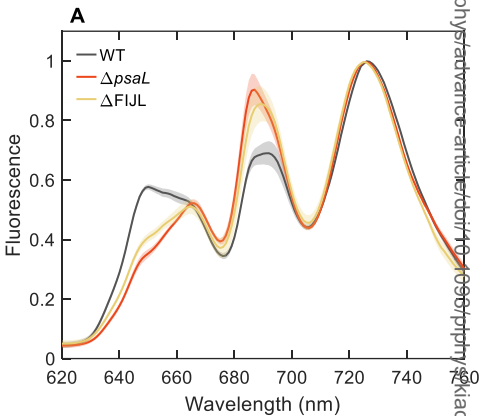
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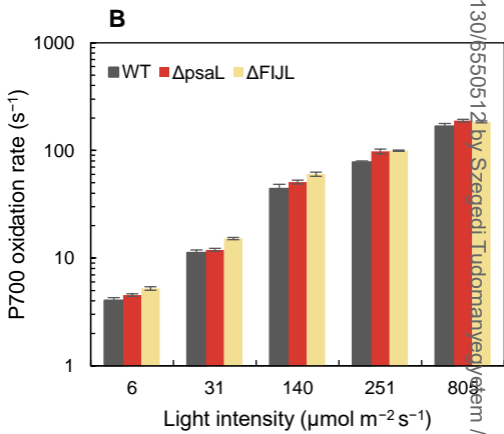
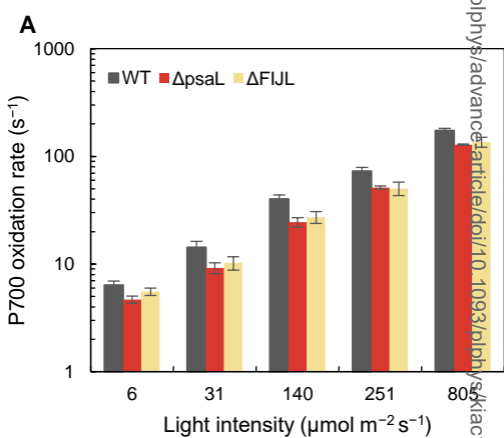
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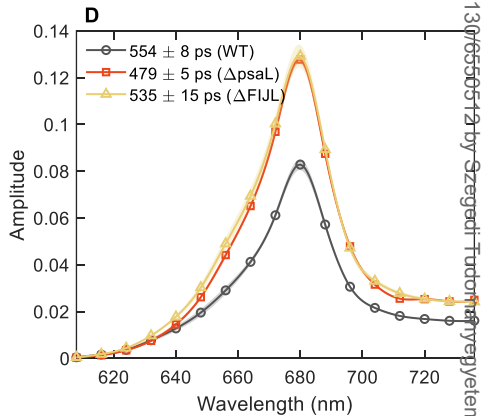
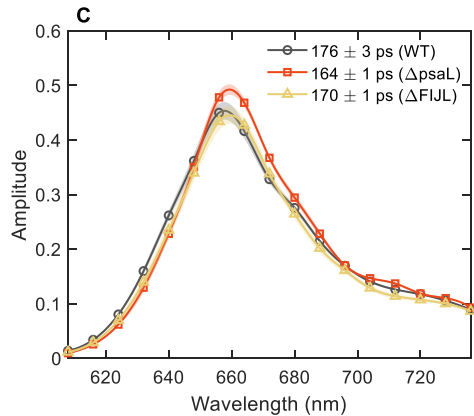
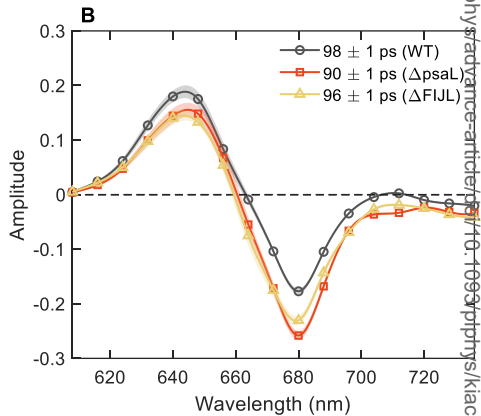
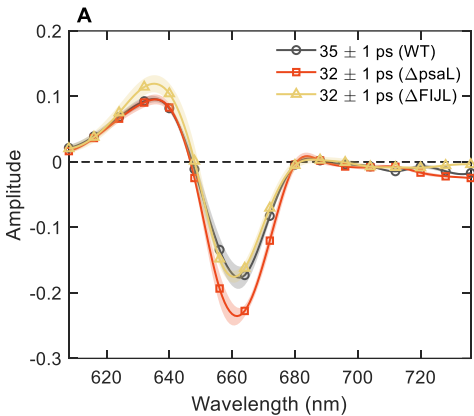
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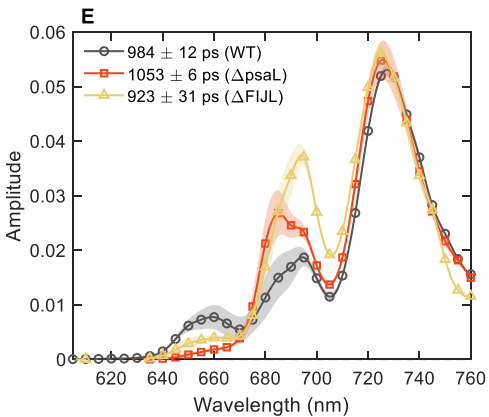
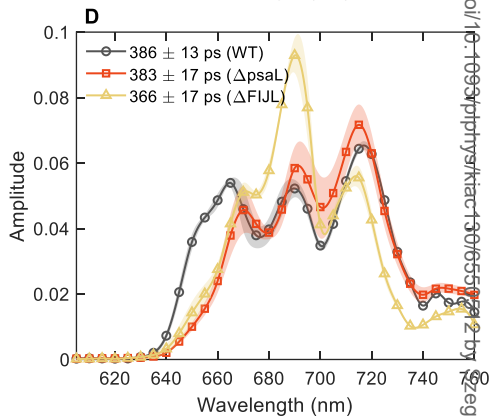
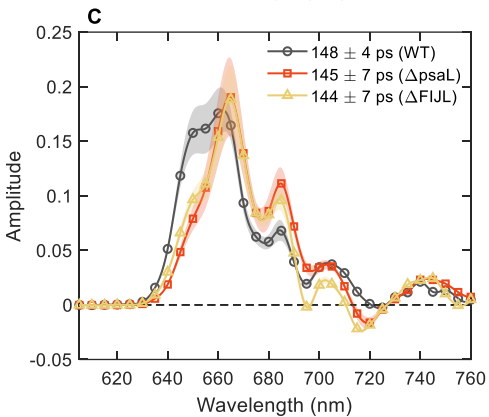
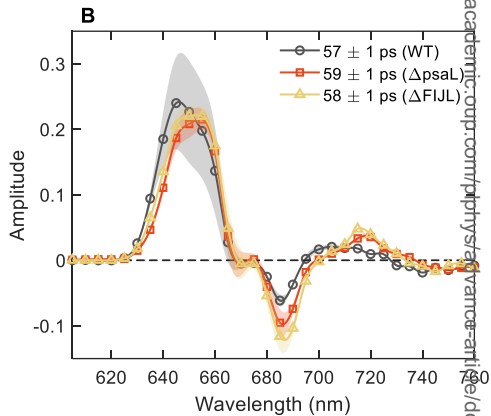
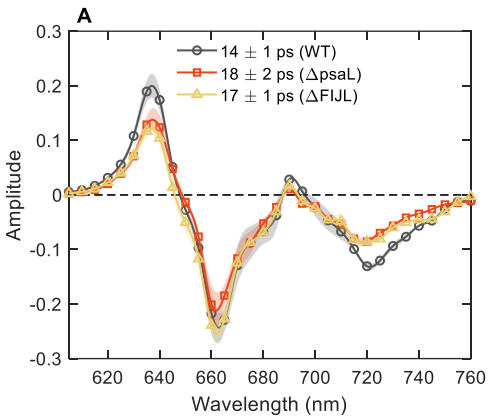
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